**Reflective Blog #2**

When teaching ELL students, it’s important to consider comprehensible input and meaningful communication. Students learn best when exposed to samples of the target language that are at or just above the student's current level of acquisition of the language. Research shows that more learning takes place when students are engaged in communication that is meaningful to them because more of the content and structure of the communication enters long-term memory. Communication is meaningful when it touches on the students' real lives or centers on topics chosen by and of interest to the students. Teachers can ensure that meaningful communication happens in the classroom by allowing students to choose books, materials and topics that interest them when appropriate (http://suu.edu/ed/fso/resources/tennesee-esl-resource-center-strategies-for-esl-teachers.pdf). Teachers can ensure that the language used in the classroom is comprehensible by evaluating the students on the Stages of Language Acquisition chart. Students go through predictable stages in acquiring a language preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. I feel that evaluating students on the Stages of Language Acquisition chart is extremely important when choosing vocabulary for ELL students, as well as meaningful communication. If you do not evaluate students with the Stages of Language Acquisition, you do not have a viable starting point for that student. It’s imperative to know which stage they belong in. It is also helpful to understand their culture and interests so that you can make the vocabulary more meaningful to the students.

Strategic scaffolding is also imperative to use when teaching ELL students. Examples of strategic scaffolding include graphic organizers, visual aids, peer help, or home language help. Theses supports need to be removed as the students make progress. This way ELLs are given the opportunity to meet their academic goals. A lot of information is lost on ELLs in the gap between background knowledge and new knowledge. I think it’s pivotal to use the strategy of providing ELL students with relevant background knowledge about a lesson previous to it being taught. This increases understanding for ELL students by activating their existing knowledge of a topic (<https://www.teachingchannel.org/blog/2013/10/25/strategies-for-ell-instruction/>). It may be tempting for teachers to group all ELLs together and distribute the same instruction and scaffolding, but ELL students, just like mainstream students, need differentiated instruction. Using differentiated instruction in the classroom can be a time-consuming strategy, especially when a language barrier is involved. When you have several ELLS all falling in different Stages of Language Acquisition, paired with different learning styles, it’s imperative. There is an overwhelming amount of strategies to use with ELLs; it’s up to the teacher to make the effort to select the right strategies for her students. I think that more than anything, ELL students need teachers who care and make it their personal goal to help ELLs succeed. Those admirable teachers will do research within and out of the classroom to plan strategic instruction to fit the needs of their individual students, leading to student achievement.